
SHARON TUSHIN

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Office of Inspector General

Wide World of the OIG

A Snapshot of Our International Colleagues

During the course of everyday work as members of the Inspector General (IG) community, we tend to focus principally on the issues of our particular agencies—and on issues of national importance. But the IG community also possesses a wealth of knowledge and experience gained from the past 23 years that has generated great interest on the part of many groups and individuals from around the world.

Over the past year, the IG community has hosted five different international groups, each with different questions and each anxious to hear U.S. perspectives on matters affecting the integrity of government programs all over the globe. Who are these visitors? What are their questions? How do we assist them?

Brazil

In September 2000, IG community representatives met with a delegation from Brazil, accompanied by several members of the World Bank. The Brazilian delegation represented the Federal Secretariat of Internal Control of the Ministry of Finance. Upon examining the types of activities the group is involved with, those involved in the IG community will note common themes and areas of focus. According to materials provided by the group its mission includes:

- Assessing compliance with the goals of the Brazilian government's Multiyear Plan, to verify consistency between activities executed and planned and confirming the achievement of goals and the adequacy of management (Government Performance and Results Act type issues).
- Focusing on federal budget execution, to verify the consistency of execution against the funding limits and destinations established in relevant legislation (Financial Management concerns).
- Examining federal public administration, to ensure its legality and assess its results in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of budgetary, financial, and asset management (Effectiveness and Efficiency matters).
- Control over transactions involving credit, guarantees, endorsements, rights and assets of the federal government, to verify the effectiveness and adequacy of internal controls (Importance of Internal Controls).

The Brazilian delegation's visit also included travel to Canada. While in the U.S., in addition to seeking insights from the IG community, the group visited with officials from

the General Accounting Office and the Office of Management and Budget as well. Several specific questions were on their minds, among those:

- How is information presented to the public? What systems and ways are used to communicate the results?
- What is your actual and potential audit universe and what are your main results over the past years?
- How is field work planned, conducted, reviewed, and supervised?
- What are the standards of ethical behavior used by each office?
- What kind of training is done for audit staff?
- What kind of control is there over private auditing companies?

Senegal

In February 2001, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State and the Institute of International Education, the IG community hosted a second delegation from Senegal. The focus of the Senegalese visit was on anti-corruption, ethics, accountability, and transparency in government. This group consisted of five government officials and two interpreters, as the group's primary language was French. The Senegalese Inspector General himself was one of the delegates. He heads what is referred to as the "controlling office" for the Senegalese government, which is responsible for such issues as the correct use of public funds, respect for government rules and regulations, and the function of governmental and related institutions. Its role is similar to that of the U.S. General Accounting Office. The Inspector General was accompanied by the Director of the General Customs Office in Dakar, Senegal, and one of the Director's technical advisors from the Ministry of Mines, Craft, and Industry. The head of a non-profit organization that works to combat corruption in Senegal also participated in the visit.

Of particular interest to the Senegalese Customs officials was a desire to learn about the activities and management of U.S. Customs organizations, new techniques to address contraband, and the protection of customs agents' lives when dealing with smugglers.

Japan

Sometimes the source of foreign interest in the OIG concept is a particular individual, as was the case in May 2001 when the Finance Attaché from the Embassy of Japan contacted Gaston L. Gianni, Jr., Vice Chair of the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency and the Inspector General of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). To paraphrase the request from the Finance Attaché:

The background of this request is that the Japanese government does not have the IG system right now but is starting to study the possibility of introducing a U.S. IG-type inspection system into our audits of financial authority. Therefore, we are very interested in how the IG is functioning for the audits of U.S. financial authorities like the FDIC.

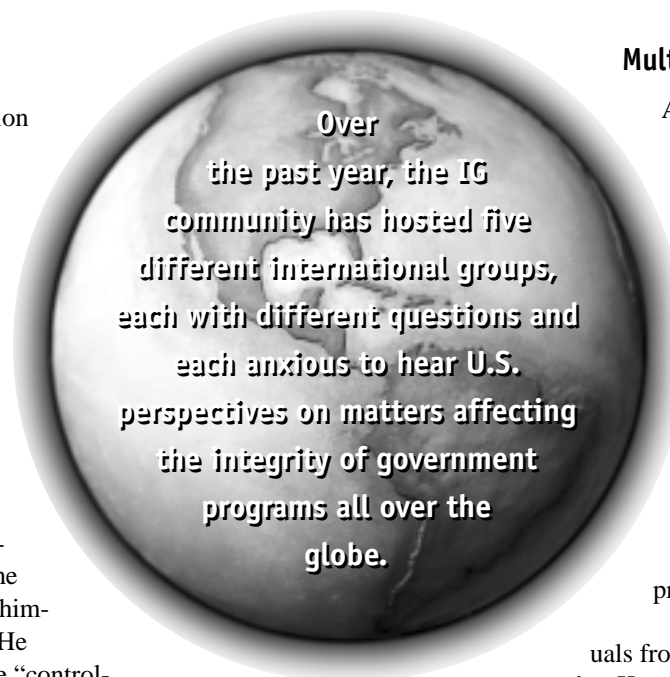
Multinational Visitors

A short time later, in June 2001, the Institute of International Education sponsored another multi-national contingent whose interest was in ethics in government and business. The project goals for this group were to (1) enhance understanding of the role and structure of ethical systems in government and business in the U.S. and (2) explore similarities and contrasts between ethics in government and in the private sector in the U.S.

The group consisted of individuals from Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador, Kuwait, Latvia-EU, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda, and the West Bank. Washington, D.C. was just one stop along the way for this group who also visited Akron, Ohio; Jackson, Mississippi; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Austin, Texas; and Los Angeles, California.

Finally, the Department of State and the Institute of International Education sponsored a fifth group made up of individuals from the Philippines, Israel, and Zimbabwe. The group requested a meeting with the FDIC to broadly discuss the FDIC's role in U.S. financial supervision and the FDIC Office of Inspector General was contacted to provide information to them as well.

Although the groups are diverse in terms of nationality, background, education and profession, they share some significant common challenges: effecting changes in their government, convincing agencies to act on recommendations,



establishing law enforcement authorities, setting up effective organizational structures, operating independently, and instilling integrity in programs and operations.

IG Community's Response

How does the IG community respond to such interest/questions/requests for information? Its primary method is to provide comprehensive PowerPoint presentations to the delegations, tailored to each group, followed by question and answer sessions that allow participants an opportunity to pursue issues of particular importance. Following the sessions the IG community also supplies pertinent materials and resources to the visitors to help them when they return to their countries: copies of the IG Act; the Integrity Committee Executive Order; Quality Standards for Federal OIGs, Quality Standards for Inspections, and Quality Standards for Investigations; Annual Reports, copies of the *Journal of Public Inquiry*; and selected semiannual reports to the Congress. The groups are also referred to various Web sites like IGNet for further information regarding the activities and relationships of the Inspectors General.

Generally, the PowerPoint presentations cover the history and establishment of the IG, responsibilities, appointment and removal, independence and oversight, reporting standards governing IG activity, OIG organization structures, and the roles and responsibilities of the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency (PCIE) and the Executive Council on Integrity and Efficiency (ECIE). Additional discussion addresses IG accomplishments, the PCIE/ECIE's major initiatives, major government challenges, relationships with other groups and coordinating organizations like the Office of Government Ethics, the

General Accounting Office, and the Office of Management and Budget.

While it is challenging to host groups with such varied backgrounds, especially with respect to the inevitable corresponding language barriers, those involved in the briefings believe they are highly effective and their success is reflected in the following acknowledgement from an official at the Institute of International Education:

"The group members all commented that your slide presentation was most informative and impressive. As you can imagine, your discussion on how you investigate allegations of wrongdoing by government officials was quite an eye opener for many of the visitors. All of the information you provided was very beneficial and meaningful. It also helped to further their understanding of the system of transparency in government."

So for those in the community who labor daily in pursuit of the IG mission and who at times may feel their overall contribution is limited in the big scheme of things, keep one thought in mind: in some far away parts of the earth, a number of your international colleagues who are unknown to you appreciate, value, and are learning from your experiences and your daily contributions to the IG community. And hopefully they are making improvements in and contributing to the integrity of the government programs that they too audit, investigate, and oversee. 🏠

Note: The IG community presentations were prepared by Mag Velasquez and Leslee Bollea from the PCIE Vice Chair's office, assisted by Jo Anne King from the FDIC OIG and Mary Gilhooly, summer intern at the FDIC OIG, currently a student at James Madison University. A copy of the general presentation is available at www.ignet.gov.